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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, May 4, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOW TO KEEP MEAT." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations and the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, here is news about meat that concerns the family pocketbook and family health, especially in warm weather -- news about the best way to keep meat in the refrigerator.

Did you ever notice that housewives differ in the way they care for meat when it comes from the market? Your easy-going next-door neighbor may just shove the package in the refrigerator "as is" -- paper, string and all, and leave it that way until she gets around to cooking it. Your very particular neighbor across the street may do just the opposite -- unwrap the meat the moment she brings it home, spread it flat on a platter in the refrigerator with no covering at all. She believes that meat keeps better if it is entirely open to the cool dry air of the refrigerator. You yourself may go a step farther and not only take the meat from the wrapping but cover it lightly with waxed paper or put it in a covered dish to keep it from drying out.

Which is best has been anybody's guess until recently when foods scientists made an investigation of the question.

Bacteriologists at the Bureau of Home Economics found that a home refrigerator that wasn't cold enough and too close wrapping or covering both hastened spoilage in meat. They say that no refrigerator is safe for keeping meat (or milk, for that matter) unless it registers 47 degrees Fahrenheit or colder. They also advise that the coldest shelf is the one for raw meat and the next coldest for cooked meat. Loose light covering is best for raw meat; loose covering with waxed paper keeps cooked meat from drying out.

At the Iowa State Experiment Station Louise Peet recently made a long study of keeping meat. She used both ice and mechanical refrigerators. Her ice refrigerator held a temperature of 47 degrees most of the time and her electric refrigerator stayed even colder -- around 42 degrees. She found that the top shelf in the ice refrigerator and the middle shelf in the electric refrigerator were coldest so were the best places to keep raw meat.

Miss Peet tried out different cuts and kinds of meat -- raw, cooked, and cured, wrapped, unwrapped and in covered containers. And what she discovered should help any housewife care for meat in the best possible way.

First, Miss Peet tested beefsteaks and lamb and pork chops. She found that these cuts keep best and longest if they are lightly wrapped in paraffin paper. Parchment paper would be all right, too, except that beef sticks to it. Miss Peet found that steaks and chops left uncovered dried out and after a day or two had a hard leathery surface that in time became almost black. As for

5/4/38

meat stored in a covered dish, it kept well for 2 days but then began to spoil -- took on what Miss Peet calls an "off flavor" and became sliny. The meat that was wrapped lightly in paraffin paper stayed red, juicy, fresh in flavor and color the longest. Miss Peet also reports that lamb spoiled sooner than beef or pork so should be kept colder -- below 45 degrees.

Much the same is true of ground beef and pork. Again the samples wrapped in waxed paper kept best. The ground meat spoiled after a day or two except when kept in an especially cold refrigerator. So if your ice-box is not colder than 45 degrees, better cook ground meat promptly instead of trying to keep it. Maybe you've wondered whether to add salt and other seasonings to hamburger before or after storing. Miss Peet says: "Before" because she finds that seasonings help keep ground meat.

As for keeping roasts, better not count on keeping an uncooked roast in good condition over 2 days. Up to 48 hours, Miss Peet found that one way of storing was as good as another. But after that all the roasts showed spoilage in one way or another. The way the roasts came out after cooking also depended partly on how long they had been stored. Roasts kept in the refrigerator only a day came out from the oven red and juicy. Those stored 2 days were medium pink. After 3 days they were pinkish gray and dry. And after that they were gray. Small roasts were grayer in color than large roasts and lean roasts were grayer than those with considerable fat.

As for keeping a roast after cooking, Miss Peet advises, first, putting it into the refrigerator while it is warm rather than cooling it out in the kitchen. The faster it cools, the less the shrinkage. How long can you keep a cooked roast in a good refrigerator? Miss Peet says 5 or 6 days in a refrigerator as cold as 48 degrees or below if you wrap the meat in wax paper or keep it in a covered perforated container. Cooked pork roasts will keep longer than beef or lamb roasts. And standing beef rib roasts keep their color better than rolled rib roasts.

As for cured meat like ham and bacon, that's another story. In a moist atmosphere mold forms on these meats in time and in a dry atmosphere the curing salts began to collect on the surface. Miss Peet says a ham will keep well for a week or 10 days in a refrigerator as cold as 45 degrees if you wrap it in wax paper or cover it. For a longer time or in a warmer temperature, leave it uncovered and remove the excess salt by parboiling before you cook it. Bacon will keep well for 2 weeks covered or uncovered. After that it keeps best in its original paraffin paper. If you store bacon in a warm place, some of the fat will melt out and it will gradually take on a strong smoky odor. As for dried beef, that will keep well 3 or 4 weeks in a covered container at 42 degrees. In waxed paper it dries out and becomes too salty.

Miss Peet advises storing sausages in casings in a loose wrapping of parchment paper. Ground sausage keeps best at 45 degrees wrapped in waxed paper.

Finally, about what Miss Peet calls the "ready-to-serve" meats--chicken loaf, boiled tongue, sliced boiled ham, spiced loaf of pork and so on. Miss Peet advises keeping these covered with wax or parchment paper and not keeping them over two days, especially in summer. All the samples she tested were spoiled at 72 hours and the portions stored in covered containers had molded before that. The tongue and chicken showed the first signs of spoilage. So, listeners, in general a good refrigerator that registers 47 degrees or below is the first essential in the safe-keeping of meat, especially in summer. And a loose wrapping of wax paper keeps most meats from drying out too fast.

